United Nations S/PV.6619

Security Council

Sixty-sixth year

Provisional

6619th meeting

Friday, 16 September 2011, 3 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Salam	(Lebanon)
Members:	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mr. Barbalić
	Brazil	Mrs. Viotti
	China	Mr. Li Baodong
	Colombia	Mr. Osorio
	France	Mr. Araud
	Gabon	Mr. Messone
	Germany	Mr. Wittig
	India	Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri
	Nigeria	Mr. Adamu
	Portugal	Mr. Moraes Cabral
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	South Africa	Mr. Sangqu
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Ms. Rice

Agenda

The situation in Liberia

Twenty-third progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia (S/2011/497)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Liberia

Twenty-third progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia (S/2011/497)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): Under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Liberia to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Toga Gayewea McIntosh, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Liberia.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2011/576, the text of a draft resolution submitted by Gabon, India, Nigeria, South Africa and the United States of America.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2011/497, the twenty-third progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia.

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, China, Colombia, France, Gabon, Germany, India, Lebanon, Nigeria, Portugal, Russian Federation, South Africa, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2008 (2011).

I will now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements after the voting.

Mr. Araud (France) (*spoke in French*): My delegation voted in favour of the draft resolution because, naturally, we support the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). We support UNMIL's work in Liberia, which is particularly necessary as the elections approach. We think a mid- and long-term presence of the United Nations in Liberia is necessary to complete the peacebuilding work that has been successfully conducted in that country.

We call on Liberia to redouble its efforts during the transition process to achieve an effective transfer of UNMIL tasks to the national authorities, particularly in the sphere of security. Moreover, the Security Council must responsibly manage the peacekeeping missions that it mandates. The missions must be adapted to the needs of the countries in which they operate. UNMIL, in a country that has been at peace for nearly eight years, is no exception to that principle of good management.

Also at stake is the capacity of the Security Council to respond to new theatres of conflict that are emerging elsewhere on the continent, such as in the Sudan, which require more Blue Helmets, more logistical support and more financing. It is important to regularly review all of our missions and to be able to adapt them, both at the top and the bottom, so as to make best use of our not unlimited resources. For that reason, we fully support the Secretary-General's recommendation, contained in paragraph 73 of his twenty-third progress report on UNMIL (S/2011/497), for a thorough review of UNMIL, its mandate, its configuration and its military and police strength by 31 May 2012 at the latest, based on the Secretariat's proposals that are expected on 30 April 2012 at the latest. This point could have figured in the new UNMIL mandate.

When the elections are over and the President is inaugurated, we call on the Secretariat to immediately send a team to Liberia to conduct, as the Secretary-General himself suggested, a review of UNMIL's format. The Security Council will then have to take action on this issue in the weeks following the receipt of the proposals, between now and the end of May 2012. We hope that the major progress achieved by Liberia will permit the withdrawal of UNMIL's military component.

Mr. Wittig (Germany): Germany welcomed Liberia's progress in peace consolidation and further stabilization, and at the same time supports the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the extension of its mandate for a further year. In view of the upcoming elections, UNMIL's presence is surely still necessary. However, we hope the progress made towards stabilization in Liberia will allow us in due time to consider further troop reductions.

In this regard, we support the assessment mission that will visit Liberia in early 2012. We hold the view that the Council should then swiftly review the police and troop strength of UNMIL, taking into account the findings of the assessment mission. The review should take place before the end of May 2012.

It is important that UNMIL and Liberia keep making progress in transferring security responsibilities from UNMIL to national authorities. The time is ripe for this transition, and the Liberian authority must not lose more time in taking over complete responsibility for security and stabilization in the country. This is also a question of responsible management of scarce resources.

Mr. Moraes Cabral (Portugal): Today's resolution reaffirms the strong commitment of the international community to pursue its assistance to Liberia in its remarkable efforts towards peace and democracy. The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) has played and will continue to play a central role in the process of addressing remaining challenges and capacity gaps, especially in the security sector, which is vital for a successful transition.

We also believe that the upcoming elections will constitute a great challenge and a crucial milestone for Liberia, and that, as mentioned earlier this week by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ellen Løj, it will also have a strong impact on the various dimensions of the transition.

As in every scenario where the United Nations has a presence, it is the Security Council's duty to carefully monitor the evolution of the situation in order to ensure that the objectives and means available reflect both the reality on the ground and the evolving priorities of national authorities. That is why we think that today's resolution and our collective action in Liberia would have benefited from an explicit commitment on the part of the Council to hold new consultations on UNMIL in May 2012, based on the outcome of the technical assessment mission scheduled for early next year, and we hope that we will be able to work within that time frame. Indeed, we believe that we must preserve our capacity to act swiftly and to adapt, if necessary, to new circumstances in Liberia.

Ms. Rice (United States of America): We are pleased to note that Liberia has come a long way, both with the support of the international community and, especially, through the great efforts of the Liberians themselves to foster peace. We are committed to ensuring that peace is sustained. West Africa remains a volatile region, in which, unfortunately, the Council has had to authorize repeated interventions. The nations of West Africa are interdependent. Their economies will rise together as stability takes hold, or fall together if conflict, chaos and refugee crises repeat themselves.

Resolution 2008 (2011) continues to support Liberia as it strengthens its own State capacity for security and the rule of law. We were not ready to predetermine Security Council actions on so important a matter as the drawdown of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), given the uncertainty surrounding the election and tensions in the region.

As Special Representative of the Secretary-General Løj noted in her remarks to the Security Council (see S/PV.6610), Liberia's elections come at a critical time for the subregion, with the recent crisis in Côte d'Ivoire and the subsequent increase in security and humanitarian concerns along the Ivorian border. The past eight years have been the longest period of unbroken peace for Liberia in the past three decades. Most important, the elections are the first to be organized and run by Liberians.

Now is not the moment to impose rigid timelines on UNMIL. We hope and expect to be able to drawdown UNMIL's military presence next year. Indeed, we have drawn down UNMIL's authorized military strength in the past from 15,000 to far fewer than 8,000 today, but any further changes to UNMIL's configuration must be a decision that is made based on the facts on the ground, not on any artificial deadline.

With Liberia's elections only four weeks away, now is the time to demonstrate unity — and we are glad that the Council has. With this resolution, we are expressing our solidarity with the people of Liberia and the region, while committing to a serious review of UNMIL's mandate, as conditions allow.

Sir Mark Lyall Grant (United Kingdom): The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) has played a pivotal role in Liberia in the eight years that it has been working in partnership with the Government and people of Liberia. The United Kingdom would like to thank the troops, police and civilian staff of UNMIL for their dedication and hard work under the excellent leadership of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ellen Margrethe Løj. It supports the renewal of UNMIL's mandate.

The elections next month, the second such elections since peace was established, mark a key milestone for Liberia's democratic development. Preparing for them has rightly been a priority.

The United Kingdom would like to see similar effort devoted to other issues critical to Liberia's future stability, such as national reconciliation and land reform. Urgent progress on the establishment of national security forces capable of maintaining law and order and the planning and implementation of the transfer of responsibilities from UNMIL to State authorities will also be critical.

The United Nations technical assessment mission scheduled for early 2012 will be an excellent opportunity to make a comprehensive assessment of the situation in Liberia. That will inform the Council's decisions on changes to UNMIL's future tasking. We are therefore disappointed that resolution 2008 (2011) did not take up amendments that a number of Security Council members put forward and that followed the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2011/497) and had the support of the host Government, namely, that the Council review the authorized military and troop strength by 30 May 2012, based on the findings of the technical assessment mission. We regret that, given the time available to us before the 30 September expiry of the mandate authorized by resolution 1938 (2010), a more serious and committed effort was not made to address such concerns.

The United Kingdom remains committed to leading efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of United Nations peacekeeping worldwide, ensuring that peacekeeping missions support political processes and help to deliver long-term stability. We do not expect any peacekeeping mission to be exempt from regular review by the Council, and will continue to work to ensure that all missions are configured and resourced in line with that purpose and that their mandates and configurations are adjusted in a timely and responsible manner.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Liberia.

Mr. McIntosh (Liberia): I did not anticipate that I would have a second opportunity to meet with the Council within 72 hours. I therefore consider it an honour and a privilege to be able to personally thank the Council, on behalf of the President, Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the Government and the people of Liberia for the action that the Council has just taken in extending the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) for another 12 months.

It is our understanding that the Council's deliberations during these past two days on the time frame of the extension have been tedious, time-consuming and objective. That makes the final decision all the more valued and appreciated. We are heartened by the unanimous vote that has just been taken.

As I mentioned in my remarks a few days ago (see S/PV.6610), Liberia faces many challenges, and UNMIL's presence contributes immensely to help us resolve them. We know that the Liberian Government and people will have to continue the march forward towards ensuring sustainable peace and sustained development long after the peacekeeping component of the United Nations work in Liberia has ended.

As I also mentioned, we are very keen to ensure that national capacity exists at appreciable levels in critical sectors so that a transition from UNMIL to national authority is as smooth and seamless as possible.

As I also mentioned, we welcome the arrival of the United Nations technical assessment mission by the end of April 2012. In that regard, I thank the Council for its prudent decision, and affirm that the Government will do all within its power to use judicially the extended period to accelerate transition planning and implementation. We will continue to count on the Council's support in all our endeavours in this period of our partnership.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council will remain seized of the matter.

The meeting rose at 3.50 p.m.